

A Guide for New Faculty

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1. After Arrival

General:

- How is my department organized? (Divisions, committees?)
- How are decisions made?
- Is there any support staff?
- What should be expected from support staff?
- The department covers what supplies and expenses?

Teaching:

- Does my department/team store syllabi so I can see how others have taught a course or similar courses?
- Is it good to teach service courses, or bad, or indifferent? Is it good to teach the same course, or stay within a single area, or teach around?
- Is it a good thing to develop a new course? An undergraduate course? A specialized course in my research area?
- How can I use a special topics course to get a new research project off the ground?
- How much time should I spend on course preparation?
- Are there guidelines for grading? What is the usual frequency of midterms and exams? How am I evaluated on teaching?
- How much do student opinion surveys count? How can I read and evaluate student opinion surveys in a constructive way? What resources are available for improving teaching skills?
- What documentation should I retain for my personnel file? Course summaries? Course exams?
- How can I make certain that my teaching is evaluated beyond student evaluations? Will a faculty member be selected to observe my teaching? How will that faculty member be selected? When will the faculty member observe the class?
- How do I order texts from the bookstore for my classes?
- What services are provided by the Testing Center?

Administrative:

- How much committee work should I expect in my department? Organization-wide?
- Which committee should I turn down if asked to serve? How much time should I expect to spend on committee work?

- How important is service work outside of the work place?
How much paper and proposal reviewing is reasonable?
Review boards? Journal assistant editorships?
- Can I get a mentor outside my department/team or ?
- How visible must one be in the department/team? Is it acceptable or detrimental if work is done at home?
- What are the appropriate and accepted ways to raise different kinds of concerns, issues, and problems?

2. Later

Trainee Issues:

- How much advising should I expect to do?
- How do I identify good students? What qualities should I look for?
How aggressive should I be in recruiting? How do I identify a problem student?
- How do I promote students/programs to the rest of the community?
- What should I keep in files on my students? (Remember that you have to write reviews and recommendations for them.)

Review Procedures:

- How long is my appointment? When will I come up for review? What sort of review? What is the process (who, what is looked for, how will I hear about it, etc.)? How will this repeat during the pre-tenure years?
- What are the department's formal and informal criteria for promotion and tenure? Who can clarify these criteria? How does one build a tenure file? Who sits on relevant committees? Who can support a nomination effectively?
- How should I go about finding people to write references for me? How many will I need? From where?
International/domestic?
- What information is important in my vitae? Should I send copies of congratulatory letters to my department chair?
- What types of raises are typical? How are raises determined? When will I find out about my raise? How?
- How can I get feedback on my performance?

Resources and research:

- What research resources are available to me as a faculty member?

- How important are grants?
- How do I get hooked into the grant-writing process?
- Who can help find people to assist me in writing the best possible proposal; to draw up the budget?
- What conferences should I go to?
- Do I need to have papers accepted?
- How much travel is allowed/expected/demanded?
- Is it better to go to large conferences or smaller workshops? What about conference/travel funds?
- How else can I gain the type of exposure necessary for good tenure letters?
- How important is first authorship?
- How is alphabetical listing of authors viewed?
- Where should I publish? What should I publish? How much/often? What are the approximate guidelines for promotion?
- What is the best way of getting feedback on a paper-to circulate pre-publication drafts widely or to show drafts to a few colleagues?
- How do journal/chapters in edited collections/(refereed or unrefereed) conferences compare?
- Should I write/edit a book?
- May material published in one place (workshop, conference) be submitted to another journal?
- How much new work is necessary to make it a "new publication"?
- Is it worthwhile to send published reports to colleagues elsewhere?
- Should I give talks within my department? How often?
- How should I publicize my work within my department?
- Should I give talks at other universities/institutions/industrial sites? How often? Where? How important is this? How do I get invited to give such talks?
- Is collaborative work encouraged or discouraged in my department/field? With other members of my department? With international colleagues? Long-standing collaborations or single efforts?
- How important is it to have some singly authored papers?
- Should I form a research group? What sorts of activities should the group do, as opposed to me and/or an individual student?
- What library resources are there? How do I get the library to purchase materials?
- How do I find out about, get nominated for and win fellowships, grants, awards, and prizes?

Personal issues:

- What policies does the Organization have for family and personal leave? Are these policies administered at the

departmental level? If so, how are such things handled in my department?

- What programs/assistance does the Work place provide for childcare?
- What are the expectations if I get sick (or my child/parent gets sick)? Do I need to find someone to cover my classes?
- What list serves should I belong to?

Tips for New Faculty

First things first:

- Make yourself known to and develop a good relationship with the department/team program assistant(s). Similarly, introduce yourself to other staff in your department.
- Organize your time effectively: use productive active hours for research and writing. Take a Time Management course if you feel you could use some pointers.
- Create a "tenure and promotion" file immediately. Keep duplicate copies of all relevant materials at home (your CV, annual reports, publications, teaching evaluations).
- Stay focused.
- Be courteous to everyone around you.
- Attend all the social functions in your Department. Isolation is often cited as a common problem for new faculty.

On Setting Goals:

- Set explicit priorities early in your career. Tenure assessment comes sooner than most people expect. Don't lose focus on your goals. Prioritize.

On Teaching:

- Enroll in a teaching enhancement course; anyone's teaching skills can be improved.
- Provide full course descriptions for your students that outline course objectives, content, texts or readings, methods and evaluation. Provide sufficient detail on the nature of assignments, value or worth, and due dates so that students aren't left guessing what you expect of them.

- Use a text processor for producing all course descriptions, reading lists, assignments, and handouts. It will save you an immense amount of time in the long run that can better be spent on other teaching and research activities. It will also facilitate future high- tech adaptations.
- Write course and lesson objectives in the form of behavioral outcomes. In other words, clearly conceptualize what you expect students to be able to do at the end of a course or lesson in concrete, well-defined terms rather than in hazy, abstract terms ("list", "describe", etc. rather than "learn" or "understand", etc.) If you establish clear behavioral objectives for courses or lessons then the rest of course or lesson planning will follow easily.
- Involve your students actively in the teaching/learning process; that is, encourage active rather than passive learning. Think of ways to involve your students in each of your lessons. It is better for students to assimilate and digest fifty ideas or concepts over a term rather than just passively record several hundred.
- Take the time to work out a grading scheme or approach that works well for you. An initial investment in time in this area can pay off a hundred fold over the years.
- Find out who the "effective" teachers are in the department/team and attend some of their lectures.
- Take a deep breath and relax before you start class (always try to keep the 10 minutes -- or more -- before class free from other commitments, to avoid arriving in class harried, irritable, out of breath, or whatever).
- Teach from your own experience instead of someone else's (if you're comfortable and having fun, students will feel it).
- There's only time to address between 2 and 5 learning objectives in a single class -- start each class by stating these 2 to 5 key points as the topic for the day. State them as learning outcomes -- what your students will be 'taking away' with them from your class. These objectives will also prove invaluable when evaluating your students.
- In each course spell out the expectations you have of the students in the first class, reiterate them consistently at regular intervals and stick with them. Students do not deal well with surprises, particularly when related to their attainment of grades.
- Think of positive learning experiences that you've had, and copy them.
- If you want feedback from students, ask specific questions; instead of "Do you have any feedback?" ask "Are we meeting the objectives?" or, "List three things that are going well in this class, and three things you'd change if you could." (You can ask this last question and have students jot down the answers on the + and - side of small index cards, so it's anonymous, but still a sense of how the course is going after

about 6 weeks or so when there is still time to make things better.)

- **Get your teaching organized. Discuss your teaching load with your department/team chair and request not to have multiple new preparations during your first years' teaching.**
- **It takes three tries to "get it right" so don't expect too much of yourself in the first year -- address the major course objectives and it will be a little easier next year, and a piece of cake in the third year -- almost boring, in fact; you'll want to start experimenting a bit more just for fun!**
- **Don't sweat the little stuff, and that includes hearing isolated complaints from individual students.... you can't please everyone all of the time, so listen to the majority, not the minority opinion. That means when someone says your question is ambiguous, you should ask for a show of hands and clarify to the whole class only if it proves to be a major issue. Ask the minority to stay after class or come in during office hours so you can address their issues without taking up everyone's time in class, or skewing the discussion.)**
- **Have someone (your mentor?) do peer evaluation of your teaching and get feedback from them.**

On Administrative Duties:

- **Avoid excessive committee & administrative work early in your career.**
- **DO serve on work place committees; it is probably the best way, aside from mentoring activities, to meet colleagues from a wide variety of disciplines from across Organization. Do try, however, to avoid being talked into becoming the chair of any committee!**

On Research:

- **Concentrate on writing grants and writing manuscripts for publication, not necessarily in that order.**
- **Keep your academic work focused; avoid too many uncorrelated research pursuits; become thematic.**
- **Keep your nose to the keyboard and write, write, write.**
- **Keep your manuscripts in the mail, not the desk.**
- **Use whatever resources are available to advance your research, within the bounds of law, ethics and courtesy.**
- **Research and learn all you can about grant applications immediately.**
- **Specialize when it comes to formal research pursuits. Find an area that interest you and then develop sufficient experience and expertise that you gradually become recognized as a national and then an international expert in your field. Research funds go to those who have a proven track record in a particular area of knowledge.**

On Documenting:

- **As stated above, create a "tenure and promotion" file immediately. Keep duplicate copies of all relevant materials at home (your CV, annual reports, publications, teaching evaluations).**
- **Document any sexual (and/or other forms) of harassment if you experience them.**
- **Save letters of thanks, supportive memos, etc., for your dossier or dossiers (to cover teaching, research, and service). You may not have to use this material, but at least you'll have it should the need arise. Copy particularly noteworthy items to the department/team chair as they are received, for inclusion in your departmental file.**
- **Document your contributions as you go, highlighting efforts made to improve your teaching (e.g., indicate course changes you've made and why, what you expected to happen, what did happen, etc.).**

On Balance:

- **You will be a more balanced person, and a better scholar, if you remember the importance of your family and a life outside academe.**
- **Don't forget to take the time to enjoy yourself.**
- **Maintain perspective on your life as a work place teacher and researcher. Take regular breaks from your work, share time with your family or friends, take up some form of physical exercise, go for a walk, listen to music, etc. Above all else maintain your sense of humor.**

On Promotion and Tenure:

- **Establish a good working relationship with the chair of your department/team and put in place yearly reviews (even if they are not required).**
- **Talk to other faculty members and establish whether there is any potential for collaborative research. Volunteering to give a seminar is one way to introduce other people to your areas of expertise.**
- **Get international recognition by attending conferences and publishing in international journals.**

- **Start to put together essential items for tenure and promotion. It is a huge task if it is left until year 5 to begin the process.**
- **Identify what you do and do not understand from the available tenure guidelines, then discuss and clarify these items with your mentor, department/team chair, and other faculty.**
- **Know procedures (the application process, what happens, making an appeal, etc.) from the beginning. Be optimistic but prepare for the worst just in case (i.e., document everything as you go). Know what materials are admissible and build them.**
- **Review other people's tenure documents (i.e. successful ones!).**

In General:

- **Seek out information on the Organization computing services, professional development workshops, internal and external grant deadlines and all Work place resources in general, ASAP.**
- **Avoid taking on more than you can handle.**
- **Avoid trying to change the world (department/team) in one day.**
- **Avoid criticizing publicly or privately.**
- **Practice diplomacy when conflicts arise.**
- **Take the time to read the and become thoroughly familiar with your rights as well as responsibilities as a faculty member.**
- **Don't get overwhelmed - others have been new faculty before and survived. You don't have to be a perfect teacher the first year. Nor do you have to publish 10 times (though it can't hurt); just show up, try to remember why you are here, listen to the students and your colleagues, and follow your feelings.**

Keep on smiling because others have made it and you probably will, too.